



Kuzuzangpola! (Greetings!)

www.musicofbhutan.org

We would like to update you on The Music of Bhutan Research Center's activities and accomplishments to date, and share some of our plans for 2010.



Photo: L to R: Janet Herman, Lyonpo Minjur Dorji, Minister for Home & Cultural Affairs, Sonam Dorji, and Jane Hancock in Thimphu, November 2009. The Home Minister expressed his full support and encouragement for the Music of Bhutan Research Center's endeavors.

CD Recordings

MBRC's first field recording, *Journey to Sengbji, Bhutan; Songs of Am Nimchu Pem* debuted in March 2009 and is now available for purchase on our website. The 68-year old Am Nimchu Pem, a rice farmer from the Trongsa area, is a nationally revered singer of *zhungdra* (old-style song). This CD, recorded by MBRC crew in her home in October 2008, captures her compelling, virtuosic rendering of eight unaccompanied songs plus includes several complementary instrumental tracks of Bhutanese *drangyen* (lute), *chewang* (fiddle) and *lim* (flute). A gorgeous 24-page full color booklet with extensive liner notes and photographs accompanies the disc.

MBRC Director of Expeditions, Kheng Sonam Dorji, in follow up to his appearances at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2008, has recently signed a contract with Smithsonian Folkways for distribution of his recording, *Music from the Mountains of Bhutan* (also still available for purchase

for a limited time through the MBRC website). The exquisite *Music from the Mountains of Bhutan* features Sonam's hauntingly beautiful rendering of traditional and original songs backed by his fine *drangyen* playing. Congratulations Sonam!

In the Field

Focus on Elder Masters

MBRC is currently attempting to locate and carry out in-depth audio/visual interviews with as many elder master musicians as possible. Time is of the essence! Many of these elders carry repertoire and knowledge unknown to younger generations. In 2009 the MBRC crew visited female singers Am Lhachem and Am Tshewang Lham of Trongsa Tshangkha, and Am Sedy of Tangsebj. They also started projects that are continuing into 2010 with Am Tshewang Lham of Paro (a favorite singer of the third King, pictured below) and Am Thinlem, originally from Trongsa Dangla Gyenpa (see below; a famous vocalist with a long career in royal service, radio and television). MBRC also initiated long-term interview projects with the dance troop director Ap Dengo, originally from Trongsa Tshangkha, and the legendary *drangyen* player Ap Dopey, from Talo, Punakha MBRC hopes to publish a **compilation CD and booklet** highlighting some of these extraordinary artists by the end of 2010, resources permitting. Stay tuned!



Am Thinlem



Am Tshewang Lham (far right)

Kheng Trip

In December 2008 Sonam Dorji led the MBRC crew on an arduous nine hour hike to Ngangla Trong, a remote village in the Shemgang District of lower Kheng, to document and record the songs, dances, ceremonies and lore of Choedpala, a festival with strong Bon (pre-Buddhist) elements. He also researched several other unusual local songs and musical instruments. We will be posting fascinating Ngangla Trong material on our website over the next few months.

To Trashigang and back

In 2009 the MBRC crew traveled across Bhutan with Tsheten Dorji, a composer of many songs that have entered Bhutanese tradition, to visit sites of natural beauty and personal biography related to his works. The crew filmed Tsheten Dorji performing and discussing several songs at their actual sites of composition—a unique approach for triggering memory, eliciting fine details, and exploring the interplay of life experience and landscape in the creation of art.

Royal Academy of Performing Arts

In November 2009 MBRC began a documentary project on the Royal Academy of Performing Arts (RAPA) in Thimphu. Established in the 1950s, the government-sponsored RAPA is a crucial teaching

and performing institution that provides traditional music and dance for royal programs, state guests and tourist groups. RAPA has also published books of folksong lyrics. MBRC is now in the process of interviewing RAPA administration, instructors, artists, and students, and filming rehearsals and other daily activities. We are particularly grateful to RAPA Director Rinzin Penjore for his support, and look forward to more work with RAPA in the coming year.



RAPA dancers in rehearsal



RAPA senior instructor Tashi Phuntsho

In the U.S.

Non-profit 501(c)3 status granted in August 2009

We are pleased to announce that the Music of Bhutan Research Center is now a legally-recognized non-profit organization! The U.S. office, located in Santa Cruz, CA, **can now accept tax-deductible contributions** to support the research, preservation and promotion of traditional music in Bhutan. We are currently in need of funding to sustain fieldwork, interview transcription, and CD production with elder masters, and to purchase field and editing equipment for use by the Bhutanese crew. Please visit our website to contribute! **Become a Friend of MBRC for \$30 and receive a gift CD!**

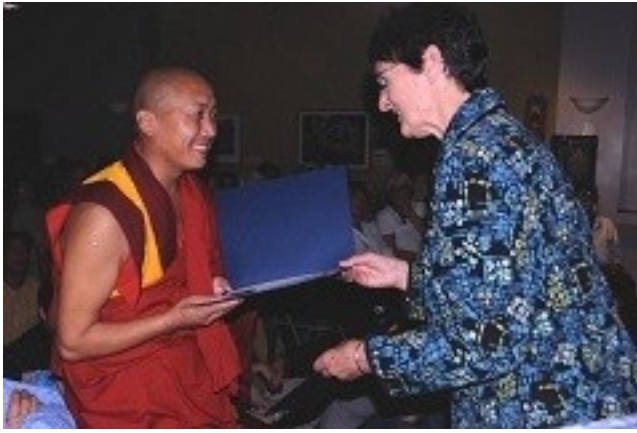
Multi-Media Presentations Up & Running

MBRC board members Dr. Janet Herman, an ethnomusicologist, and Ms. Jane Hancock, a photographer, have developed vivid public presentations on Bhutanese music and the work of MBRC. The informative program incorporates audio samples, slides, and video footage. In spring 2009 they appeared to a packed house at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco in conjunction with the groundbreaking *Dragon's Gift* exhibit of Bhutanese monastic art, and also gave enthusiastically-received presentations at the Museum of Art & History @ the McPherson Center in Santa Cruz, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Our next presentations will be at University of California, Santa Cruz, on March 6 and at Land of the Medicine Buddha in Soquel, CA on March 28 (please see the "events" section on our website for details). **We are currently booking for the rest of 2010, so please contact us if you are interested!** Bring something new to your local museum, retreat center, book store, civic organization, charitable group, college or...?

MBRC Outreach Events

The Mayor of Santa Cruz, Cynthia Mathews (pictured below), at the Museum of Art & History @ the McPherson Center, proclaimed March 29, 2009 as **Bhutan Appreciation Day in the City of Santa Cruz**. In attendance were special guests Neten Dorji (pictured) and Gyem Dorji, monks from the Central Monastic Body, Bhutan. The celebratory program included a multi-media presentation and refreshments from MBRC, and a showcase of Bhutanese cultural objects from the collection of tour guide Linda Fessette.

In May 2009 MBRC brought **Tshering** (below), a Bhutanese graduate student at the University of Montana and teacher at RAPA, out to California to perform at the Asian Art Museum's Spring Family Festival in San Francisco. The vocalist and *drangyen* player also gave a concert in Santa Cruz and visited Vine Hill Elementary School in Scotts Valley.



Mayor Cynthia Mathews & Lopen Neten Dorji



Tshering

Also thanks to David Mayers of KKUP Radio 91.5 FM, Cupertino, CA, and Noam Lemish of Centennial Radio 101 FM, Bhutan, for having us as guests on their radio shows!

Traveling to Bhutan?

Please let your tour company know that Kheng Sonam Dorji is available for performances in Thimphu. Besides being a stellar musician, he speaks English and provides fascinating background. A captivating entry into the world of traditional Bhutanese music! Please contact us for more information.



Sonam Dorji performing for tourist group in Paro

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Tashi Delek! (good wishes!)